

MOVE AGAINST CANCER SHOWCASES INNOVATIVE MODEL - PILOTED IN LONDON - BRINGING MOVEMENT TO MORE PEOPLE WITH CANCER

Introduction

At MOVE Against Cancer charity we have long championed the benefits of exercise for people with cancer and we're delighted to share an example of a model for sustainability and community impact which will help improve more Londoners' lives.

We have been working in partnership with RM Partners North West & South West London Cancer Alliance to establish more 5k Your Way groups across the region.

Background

Our 5k Your Way initiative has over 125 community-led groups across the UK and Ireland, located at designated parkruns. There are currently seven 5k Your Way groups in London, four of which have been set up in the past year. At the monthly meetups participants are encouraged to walk, jog, run, volunteer or have coffee and a chat. Everyone is welcome: those living with and beyond cancer, their family and friends, healthcare professionals and those who have lost someone to cancer.

Since 2016 our mission at MOVE Against Cancer has been to support, inspire and empower people impacted by cancer to live an active and fulfilling life. In order for the 5k Your Way groups to be more sustainable, to better reach underserved communities, to maximise links with healthcare professionals and to enhance community engagement, we have created and piloted a new model of sustainable working in partnership with RM Partners.

Pilot

Lloyd Park (Croydon) parkrun was chosen as the location for a new 5k Your Way group and for trialling the new partnership between MOVE Against Cancer and RM Partners.

An agreement was reached between MOVE Against Cancer and RM Partners in terms of the set-up tasks and funding. It was agreed that MOVE Against Cancer would recruit volunteers, build networks, engage in the community, design and develop the 5KYW programme, launch the new group and then learn and adapt. RM Partners would help to build networks, raise awareness (especially through their physical activity training for clinical teams using the national Physical Activity Clinical Champions programme) and fund the set-up costs.

- The new 5k Your Way group at Lloyd Park (Croydon) was launched in October 2024.
- Clinicians are aware of the group and some of the group ambassadors are locally-based healthcare professionals.
- The impact of the new group was felt quickly - it grew from 7 to 21 participants within two months. Participants have shared a range of benefits: *one returner walked as far as she felt able to; one attendee came despite having chemo earlier in the week and managed to do one lap; another used the group meet up as a form of mindfulness to help with their 'chemo brain'...*

This model for working with Cancer Alliances is scalable and replicable. New groups in Kingston and Fulham have subsequently been launched since the initial pilot in Croydon. Work on further groups in Finsbury Park, Harrow and Woolwich are in development. With the support of cancer alliances, it is thought more groups across London and nationally could be created.

Summary

This new sustainable model showcases the wide ranging potential of a partnership between MOVE Against Cancer and a Cancer Alliance in helping to create more 5k Your Way groups. The collaboration offers both short and long term impact in the community and for minimal set-up and running costs.

Short-term gains include immediate access to a safe, welcoming community that encourages physical activity at any point in a cancer journey, as well as social connection and a sense of normality. Long-term gains include the fact that regular physical activity is linked to reduced recurrence risk, reduced fatigue, improved quality of life and fewer treatment side effects.

Once set up the 5k Your Way groups are free, inclusive, run by volunteers impacted by cancer and embedded in communities, ensuring people from different backgrounds (including underserved groups) can participate. Many groups continue for years with little further financial input but regularly reconnect with MOVE Against Cancer HQ to meet other volunteers, learn from best practice and challenges in other regions, and to support them with getting more volunteers or increasing participation levels. At MOVE Against Cancer we want more people impacted by cancer to have access to what a 5k Your Way group can offer.